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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001831

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT, SA/PD; NSC FOR  
E. MILLARD

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10-22-13

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SUBJECT: Norwegian envoy briefs donors on status of the LTTE's counterproposals and possible resumption of talks

Refs: (A) Colombo 1827, and previous  
- (B) Oslo 2153 (Notal)

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.  
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador Lunstead attended a meeting of major bilateral donors to Sri Lanka on October 21. Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar briefed the group on the status of the Tiger's counterproposals developed in response to the GSL's north/east interim setup proposal. Brattskar commented that Sri Lanka's political calendar in the south could make a near-term return to talks a bit problematic. Brattskar's comments were generally positive in theme, indicating that the effort to reinvigorate the peace process was steadily moving ahead. Para Seven contains the text of a proposed Mission statement to be made public once the Tigers announce their counterproposals. END SUMMARY.

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Norwegian Envoy Briefs Donors  
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2. (C) Ambassador Lunstead attended a meeting of major bilateral donors to Sri Lanka on October 21. Briefing the group, Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar said he had met with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) political chief S.P. Thamilchelvam upon the latter's return to Sri Lanka from Europe earlier this week (see Reffels). Based on understandings reached at this meeting, Brattskar said he would travel to the LTTE-controlled town of Kilinochchi in the north on October 31 to receive the LTTE's counterproposals developed in response to the GSL's north/east interim administration proposal made in July. After receiving the LTTE document, Brattskar said he would return to Colombo and provide it to the Sri Lankan government. Interestingly, the Tigers had wanted to provide their response earlier, but Brattskar had to tell them that he understood that most key GSL officials would be out of Colombo at an event in the deep south early next week and would not be in position to receive it before October 31. Brattskar confirmed reports that the LTTE planned to hold a press conference to describe its counterproposals in Kilinochchi on November 1. The group also plans to post its response on the pro-LTTE website "TamilNet."

3. (C) Regarding the substance of the LTTE's counterproposals, Brattskar said the group seemed to expect a favorable reaction from the international community to its document. The Ambassador asked whether the group understood that simply providing a nicely worded document was not enough, there had to be changes in its behavior, e.g., an end to the assassinations of Tamils, harassment of Muslims, etc. Brattskar confided that he did not know if they understood that point, but the GoN consistently urged the group to change its behavior.

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Problems in Scheduling Talks  
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4. (C) Turning to a possible resumption of GSL-LTTE talks, Brattskar said the Tigers had made clear to him that they were willing to return to the negotiations, which they pulled out of in April. There were practical difficulties in scheduling a full round of talks, however. With the annual budget debate in Parliament coming up and indications that the opposition planned to press the GSL at every opportunity in coming weeks, the government was going to have its hands full in November-December. In light of that, it might be hard to schedule a full round of talks in that timeframe. Brattskar added that a shorter round of talks lasting perhaps 2-3 days and focusing more on procedural issues might be possible.

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COMMENT  
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15. (C) Brattskar's comments largely tracked with those that Norwegian Special Envoy Erik Solheim made to Embassy Oslo in Ref B. Like Solheim, Brattskar seemed generally positive about the current situation, indicating that the effort to reinvigorate the peace process was steadily moving ahead. He seemed convinced that the Tigers were fully committed to returning to negotiations and, based on the group's recent public remarks, that does appear to be the case. That said, the apparent difficulty in scheduling talks due to the presentation of the budget and the expected cohabitation jousting flowing from that event is potentially a new fly in the ointment. While the situation in the south will be politically combative, however, we do not think it will so fully absorb the GSL's attention that substantive talks would have to be delayed for too long.  
END COMMENT.

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Suggested Press Statement  
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16. (SBU) During the meeting, Ambassador was told that the EU's local mission plans to issue a statement once the Tigers' counterproposals are made public. The EU said its statement would be short and generic, and would not comment directly on the content of the counterproposals.

17. (SBU) We also think it would be appropriate for Mission to issue a short press statement after the LTTE's counterproposals are out. As with the EU mission's statement, we do not propose commenting on the details of the LTTE's document. Our statement would be along the following general lines:

BEGIN TEXT:

"The LTTE's delivery of counterproposals made in response to the Sri Lankan government's interim administration proposal for the North and East is a constructive step. We urge that both parties build on this step by resuming negotiations in a timely manner. With a constructive approach and willingness to compromise, we continue to believe that a negotiated solution to the conflict is possible. We salute the Norwegian government for its ongoing facilitation effort."

END TEXT.

18. (U) Minimize considered.

LUNSTEAD